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PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

Implementation of the Plan of Action of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004

Report of the High Commissioner

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with Commission resolution 2001/61. Since the last session of the Commission, the High Commissioner reported on the implementation of the Plan of Action of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education to the General Assembly (A/56/271). Accordingly, this report provides only supplementary information received in the period from mid-July to November 2001 in response to the notes verbales and letters addressed in May 2001 to all Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, drawing their attention to General Assembly resolution 55/94 and to Commission on Human Rights resolution 2001/61 and soliciting information on their implementation. The report also includes information on related activities undertaken by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in this period.

2. This report follows the structure of the Plan of Action, whose programme for implementation seeks to: assess needs and formulate effective strategies for human rights education (component 1); strengthen programmes and capacities for human rights education at the international, regional, national and local levels (components 2-5); develop in a coordinated way effective human rights education materials (component 6); strengthen the role and capacity of the mass media in the furtherance of human rights education (component 7); and disseminate globally the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (component 8). This report highlights the advances in those components for which OHCHR has received related information.

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II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

A. Components 2 and 3: strengthening international and regional programmes and capacities for human rights education

1. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

3. In line with the recommendations of the mid-term global evaluation of the Decade and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, the contribution of OHCHR to the Decade's objectives has continued to focus on the following courses of action.

Ensuring basic worldwide coordination for the Decade

4. The Office has continued to disseminate information on the Decade and on human rights education in general by answering related inquiries from interested representatives of Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and others. A page of the OHCHR Web site specifically related to the Decade is periodically updated in order to disseminate related information.

Facilitating networking and information-sharing among the Decade's actors

5. OHCHR has continued to develop its database on human rights education (available through the OHCHR Web site at http://www.unhchr.ch/hredu.nsf) as well as its resource collection on human rights education, which includes materials for human rights education and training produced at all levels and which is publicly accessible at OHCHR headquarters in Geneva (details on these two projects are provided in the report to the General Assembly).

6. In addition, OHCHR has organized international and regional activities focusing on human rights education or with a human rights education component. At the International Conference on Human Rights and Democratization in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus (Dubrovnik, 8-10 October 2001), representatives of relevant Governments, as well as observers from intergovernmental organizations, national human rights institutions and members of civil society, stressed the importance of human rights education as a strategy for the prevention of human rights violations and for creating a culture of peace, tolerance and human rights. As a follow-up to discussions at the Conference, OHCHR launched a programme of regional cooperation to contribute to the strengthening of national capacities for human rights, which includes a human rights education component. The Office also organized, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Government of Mexico, the Regional Conference on Human Rights Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico City, 28 November-1 December 2001), at which representatives of relevant Governments, national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions adopted the Mexico Declaration, which contains various recommendations for furthering human rights education at the regional, subregional and national levels.

7. The Office has substantively participated in and, in some cases, financially supported training and educational activities organized by various institutions and organizations at the international and regional levels, such as the Human Rights Educators' Forum (Corrymeela, United Kingdom, 4-7 October 2001) organized by Amnesty International and the Seminar on Human Rights Education for a Culture of Peace in Latin America (Caracas, 14-17 October 2001), organized by the Red Latinoamericana de Educación para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos. Finally, OHCHR has continued to assist and support human rights education programmes by all actors through the provision, free of charge, of its publications.

Supporting national capacities for human rights education

8. OHCHR has continued its technical cooperation activities aimed at strengthening national capacities in the field of human rights, including human rights education, training and public information activities. Details are provided in the reports of the Secretary-General on advisory services and technical cooperation in the field of human rights (E/CN.4/2002/116) and on national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (E/CN.4/2002/114) to the Commission.

Assisting grass-roots human rights education initiatives

9. As indicated in previous reports, the Assisting Communities Together (ACT) project was initiated in 1998, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to assist organizations and individuals at the local level in carrying out activities aimed at strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights in local communities.

10. In December 2001, OHCHR will launch the 2001/2002 phase, to be implemented in the following countries:

- Burkina Faso, Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Guinea, Liberia, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda (Africa);

- Cambodia, Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem, Philippines and Samoa (Asia);

- Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uzbekistan and Yugoslavia (Europe);

- Colombia, Haiti and Venezuela (Latin America and the Caribbean).

The application forms and other details on the ACT project are available upon request at the Office of the High Commissioner in Geneva and its field presences in the above-mentioned countries, as well as concerned UNDP country offices.

Developing a selected number of human rights training materials

11. Work has continued on some of the training packages developed within the programme of the Decade and in particular those aimed at human rights monitors; judges, prosecutors and lawyers; and prison officials. In the development of these materials, OHCHR works in close cooperation with relevant experts and organizations. In the reporting period, the Training Manual on Human Rights Monitoring[1] was published in English, as well as the pilot version of Human Rights and Prisons - a Training Package on Human Rights for Prison Officials.

12. OHCHR has continued to publish other human rights materials (the updated list of OHCHR publications is available upon request at the Office of the High Commissioner in Geneva) and to disseminate them among governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Globally disseminating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

13. In the reporting period, OHCHR has continued updating and revising its UDHR database, containing more than 320 versions of the Universal Declaration. The database is available through the OHCHR Web site (http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/index.htm).

14. In addition, OHCHR has posted on this database a new section comprising a list of more than 500 items on the Universal Declaration (printed and multimedia material as well as a broad array of souvenirs) developed by governmental and non-governmental organizations both on the occasion of the Declaration's fiftieth anniversary (1998) and prior to/after the anniversary year. The list reflects OHCHR's UDHR collection, a selection of which is permanently displayed on the ground floor of OHCHR's headquarters in Geneva.

2. United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention

15. The Centre for International Crime Prevention of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP) has contributed to the realization of the Plan of Action for the Decade by promoting human rights standards and guidelines in the area of the administration of justice developed by United Nations organs (such as the United Nations Congresses on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders). Those norms include provisions, inter alia on the protection of offenders' and victims' rights, children's rights and women's rights, to guide the conduct of various professionals in line with human rights standards. In those areas, the Centre provides legal advisory services and technical assistance to Member States through technical cooperation projects. In addition, ODCCP administers a Global Programme against Corruption as well as a Global Programme against Trafficking in Human Beings, and provides technical assistance in order to prevent and combat those phenomena.

B. Components 4 and 5: strengthening national and local programmes and capacities for human rights education

16. The Plan of Action for the Decade provides for the establishment, at the initiative of Governments or other relevant institutions, of national committees for human rights education which should include a broad coalition of governmental and non-governmental actors and be responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive, effective and sustainable national plan of action for human rights education, in consultation with regional and international organizations. Such a plan could constitute a part of the overall national plan of action for human rights, when applicable. OHCHR has developed related Guidelines (A/52/469/Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1) which have been widely disseminated.

17. In the reporting period, OHCHR has received the following information:

(a) Colombia. The Government of Colombia highlighted a number of activities undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior aimed at raising awareness on human rights and humanitarian law through radio programmes, distribution of publications and television spots, with a focus on the protection of human rights defenders and on respect towards differences. The target audiences are the general public (both in cities and in rural areas), police forces, NGOs, indigenous communities and other actors. Capacity-building programmes and training sessions for civil servants working for the central and the local Government are also organized, often in partnership with United Nations agencies, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the OHCHR. The Government of Colombia further reported on the role played by the Defensoria del Pueblo in human rights education. This institution produces and disseminates relevant publications and audio-video materials, organizes training sessions for governmental and municipal civil servants, designs and implements awareness-raising campaigns and undertakes other related efforts. Each programme focuses on a specific right or issue (such as reproductive health or domestic violence) or on a set of rights (economic and social rights, political rights, children's rights, etc.);

(b) Costa Rica. The Government of Costa Rica reported that, in accordance with article 63 of the 1997 Children and Youth Code, which is based on the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, teaching institutions shall promote children's rights among the students but also among teaching and administrative personnel. In addition, the National Education Plan of the Ministry of Public Education promotes awareness-raising on human rights among students. Cooperation between the Government and bodies such as the University for Peace, the Interamerican Institute for Human Rights and UNESCO have resulted in joint human rights education projects such as workshops for teachers, members of NGOs and representatives of governmental institutions and the development of educational materials. The Government further reported on the setting up of a specific room devoted to the rights of the child in the Costa Rica Child Museum, as well as on a survey in the country and in Panama to analyse the state of human rights education in the secondary school system, which prompted a publication and a regional meeting of educators;

(c) Ethiopia. The Government of Ethiopia reported ongoing activities being undertaken by various ministries. The Ministry of Justice, through its Legal Education and Training Department and Women's Affairs Department, promotes legal education, including a

human rights component, through the media (newspapers, radio and television) and the organization of training programmes for judges, public prosecutors and women's groups. The Ministry of Education undertook a revision of school curricula in order to include human rights principles. The Government of Ethiopia also mentioned the complementary role played by civil society in raising awareness on human rights. The Government of Ethiopia underlines the need for United Nations technical assistance to better integrate human rights education in its programmes and activities;

(d) Holy See. The Holy See undertook surveys on the existing human rights education programmes within the network of Catholic institutions (schools, colleges, parishes, training centres and institutes). These surveys showed the special attention given to the promotion of economic and social rights, to the foundations of human rights in general, as well as to legal aspects. Catholic educational institutions focus on specific human rights issues (such as bioethics and the right to development) or on specific groups (such as disabled persons, indigenous peoples and minorities). In order to carry out human rights education programmes, which are directed not only at members of the clergy but also children and students attending Catholic schools, partnerships have been established with United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and civil society. The Holy See stressed that in some Catholic schools children and teachers from other religions are present in large numbers, and this promotes tolerance and peaceful coexistence;

(e) Mexico. The Government of Mexico informed OHCHR that as part of the 1993 educational reform human rights principles have been incorporated throughout the primary and secondary school curricula in subjects such as history (political rights), geography (environment-related rights, ethnic diversity, biodiversity) and natural sciences (right to life, health-related rights). In this exercise the age of the children has been taken into account and an approach developed that is relevant to their daily life. In the 1999/2000 school year a course of civic and ethics studies, which aims at raising awareness among teenagers on risks which can affect the free exercise of their rights, was introduced. Furthermore, the Ministry of Public Education has developed materials for students and for teachers which address human rights issues, and has revised textbooks and teaching guides;

(f) Thailand. In 1998, a national committee was set up to draft the National Policy and Plan of Action on Human Rights, which was completed and approved by the Parliament in October 2000; one of the 11 sections of the document concerns human rights education. The National Policy and Plan of Action on Human Rights is implemented through inter-ministry coordination, and the Ministry of Education is the focal point for the specific section on human rights education. The Government also reported on educational activities undertaken by the Office of the Attorney-General (focusing on public information activities for vulnerable groups and training of legal professionals), the Ministry of Education (focusing on children's rights, including the development of school curricula, materials and training for teachers and the elaboration of related legislation) and the Ministry of the Interior (focusing on the empowerment of community organizations);

(g) Tunisia. The Tunisian National Commission for Human Rights Education, which is chaired by the Minister of Education and comprises representatives of NGOs, was established in April 1996 in the framework of the Decade. It is tasked with proposing strategies for human

rights education in the light of relevant United Nations guidelines and preparing reports on relevant activities in schools and at the university level. The Government reports that human rights education takes place through the integration of human rights concepts in related programmes and materials, the organization of specific events and the revision and elimination of stereotypes contrary to tolerance in textbooks. Tunisia has also been promoting the revalorization of the teaching profession as part of the 1989 education reform; human rights modules have been included in pre-service training for future teachers in all subjects, while in-service human rights training sessions are also organized;

(h) Turkey. In July 1999, the Turkish National Committee on the Decade for Human Rights Education published the Human Rights Education Programme of Turkey (1998-2007), in partnership with relevant ministries, academic institutions and civil society. The programme is now being implemented in cooperation with various partners, including intergovernmental organizations (United Nations, Council of Europe) and civil society organizations. Among the activities mentioned are: the training of trainers for civil society entities and for the police; the inclusion of human rights issues in in-service training and entrance examinations for civil service posts; the conduct of research on human rights concepts, with the support of UNESCO; and various awareness-raising activities. The Committee expressed its agreement with various recommendations of the mid-term global evaluation of the Decade, and stressed the need for more resources to be allocated, at all levels, to human rights education.

Note

[1] Professional Training Series No. 7, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.XIV.2.